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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000740

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF, AF/E AND DRL;
LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: DECENTRALIZATION FORUM: FOLLOW-UP WITH PND

REF: A. DJIBOUTI 650

[B](#). DJIBOUTI 714

Classified By: Pol/Econ Erinn C. Stott for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In one of several conversations (reftel B and septel to follow) with the participants of the recent forum held to discuss decentralization and the special status for Djibouti City, Embassy spoke with the Secretary General of the National Democratic Party (PND), Mohamed Abdillahi Waberi. While the forum was attended by only the parties in the government coalition, and one non-aligned, independent party, there was a significant and varied debate on several of the articles in the proposed law. Waberi appeared to have been pleased with the forum, but was much more critical of the event than some of the other participants. Waberi said the lead time given to parties to study the draft text was much too short. He also said some of the parties did not send decision makers to the forum, hampering the ability for the forum to come to a decision. However, he did state that there were more convergence of opinions than confrontations between the political parties. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The July 2-14 Decentralization Forum held in Djibouti was a good experience, according to the Secretary General of the National Democratic Party (PND), Mohamed Abdillahi Waberi. The forum was organized by the Minister of Interior, who personally invited all political parties to discuss the proposed draft of the Special Statute for Djibouti City. Waberi stated his party aimed at discussing its pillar principles with the government - freedom of expression, judicial independence, decentralization, and a liberal economy. He said, in his opinion, the main points of contention during the debate on the draft law were the nomination of the Mayor of Djibouti City, the functions of the Mayor, and the minimum age for being elected to the position of Mayor.

[1](#)3. (C) Waberi indicated that most of the parties in attendance had difficulty with the original draft requiring the Mayor be nominated by the President of the Republic. The preferred manner of selection was by election. In the end the consensus decided upon an Mayoral election by the collection of Community Councils. Another issue was whether current public officials, such as Ministers or Members of Parliament, should be eligible for the position of Mayor. The consensus was that electing current public officials would not be allowed. Some of the participants observed that this could hamper the autonomous nature of the management of Djibouti City. Regarding the minimum age for a Mayoral candidate, the parties preferred to lower the required age from 25, as stated in the original draft of the statute, to 23, as stipulated in the Djiboutian Constitution for minimum age to hold office.

[1](#)4. (C) Waberi's complaints about the forum included the efficacy of other parties' participants and the time given to study the draft. He said some of the parties did not send decision makers and were not very knowledgeable. This caused confusion because the party's representatives kept referring to French law, instead of trying to write Djiboutian law. Waberi also said the government should have given the parties more time in advance of the forum to study the text.

[1](#)5. (C) Waberi added the government must respect political parties and show flexibility to both opposition and majority parties. However, he said, the opposition should not refuse any attempt at dialogue offered by the government. National interest should prevail above all issues between the two sides. Waberi also noted that political parties in Djibouti are in need to training because, at the moment, they are doing as they please instead of acting as professional politicians. In his view, a weakness of parties is that their base is often cut off from leadership, with no continuity of work. Waberi stated that parties do not call upon their members for input or action unless there is an election. Capacity building is needed. For Waberi, the next step for the decentralization forum is a final consultation with the political parties to verify that all amendments discussed are included before it is sent to the National Assembly for a vote.

RAGSDALE